



# ACHIEVING THE GOAL OF ENDING VETERAN HOMELESSNESS

## *Criteria and Benchmarks*

The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the Department of Veterans Affairs have adopted a vision of what it means to end all homelessness and specific criteria and benchmarks for ending Veteran homelessness in order to help guide communities as they take action to achieve the goal. Together, these criteria and benchmarks are intended to help to define the vision of ending Veteran homelessness within communities and to help align local efforts in support of that vision, with a focus on long-term, lasting solutions.

We recognize that all communities have unique attributes and will meet the goal in different ways. These criteria and benchmarks represent our best thinking at this time on what it looks like to end Veteran homelessness. We have been learning more as we have worked with communities to understand their progress and achievements; we have revised these criteria, and added these benchmarks, in order to provide more specific guidance to communities. We expect to continue to learn and think further as more communities approach and succeed in meeting the goal of ending Veteran homelessness and will continue to review and evaluate the effectiveness of these criteria and benchmarks over time.

## CRITERIA

### 1. THE COMMUNITY HAS IDENTIFIED ALL VETERANS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

The community has used coordinated outreach, multiple data sources, and other methods, to identify, enumerate, and engage all Veterans experiencing homelessness, including Veterans who are unsheltered, as well as Veterans in shelters, Grant and Per Diem programs and other VA residential programs, other transitional housing programs, etc. This identification of Veterans includes both Veterans that meet the definition of chronic homelessness and Veterans that are experiencing homelessness but do not meet the definition of chronic homelessness. The definition of Veteran used includes all persons who served in the armed forces, regardless of how long they served or the type of discharge they received.

### 2. THE COMMUNITY PROVIDES SHELTER IMMEDIATELY TO ANY VETERAN EXPERIENCING UNSHELTERED HOMELESSNESS WHO WANTS IT

While ending Veteran homelessness is primarily about the community's capacity to connect Veterans to permanent housing, the community also has the capacity to immediately offer some form of shelter (i.e., emergency shelter, bridge or transitional housing, other temporary settings) to any Veteran experiencing unsheltered homelessness in the community who wants it, while assisting the Veteran to swiftly achieve permanent housing. Access to shelter is not contingent on sobriety, minimum income requirements, criminal records, or other unnecessary conditions.

**3. THE COMMUNITY ONLY PROVIDES SERVICE-INTENSIVE TRANSITIONAL HOUSING IN LIMITED INSTANCES**

In instances when transitional housing is provided to a Veteran, priority is placed on the use of transitional housing as a short-term bridge to permanent housing. The community only provides service-intensive transitional housing to those Veterans who have indicated a preference for service-intensive transitional housing prior to moving to a permanent housing destination.

**4. THE COMMUNITY HAS CAPACITY TO ASSIST VETERANS TO SWIFTLY MOVE INTO PERMANENT HOUSING**

The community has identified permanent housing for all Veterans known to be experiencing homelessness, including those Veterans who have chosen to enter transitional housing, and are able to assist Veterans to move into their permanent housing quickly and without barriers to entry, using Housing First principles and practices.

**5. THE COMMUNITY HAS RESOURCES, PLANS, AND SYSTEM CAPACITY IN PLACE SHOULD ANY VETERAN BECOME HOMELESS OR BE AT RISK OF HOMELESSNESS IN THE FUTURE**

The community has resources, plans, and system capacity in place for identifying (1) Veterans entering or returning to homelessness in the future, and (2) Veterans at risk of homelessness.

- a) The community is routinely using multiple data sources and conducting comprehensive outreach and engagement to identify such Veterans.
- b) The community has an adequate level of resources and the capacity to provide appropriate services that will, whenever possible, prevent homelessness for at-risk Veterans.
- c) The community has an adequate level of resources and appropriate plans and services in place to promote the long-term housing stability of all Veterans who have entered permanent housing.

## **BENCHMARKS**

In assessing whether a community has achieved these criteria, Federal agencies will also consider the following four benchmarks to help confirm if the goal of ending Veteran homelessness has been achieved. Taken together, these benchmarks are indicators of how well a community's system is working to ensure that Veteran homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring. In considering these benchmarks, Federal agencies will take into account contexts and circumstances specific to local communities. To help measure your progress on these benchmarks, please see the [specifications we have developed](#).

**A. CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS AMONG VETERANS HAS BEEN ENDED**

The community has no Veterans experiencing chronic homelessness, with the exception of (1) any Veterans who have been identified and offered a permanent housing intervention, but who have either not yet accepted or not yet entered housing, and (2) any Veterans who have been offered a permanent housing intervention but have chosen to enter service-intensive transitional housing prior to entering a permanent housing destination. The community continues to outreach to Veterans experiencing chronic homelessness that have not yet accepted an offer of a permanent housing intervention, and continues to offer a permanent housing intervention to those Veterans at least once every two weeks.

**B. VETERANS HAVE QUICK ACCESS TO PERMANENT HOUSING**

Veterans who experience homelessness should have the opportunity to quickly move into permanent housing. An indicator of whether a community has a system in place for quickly and effectively connecting Veterans experiencing homelessness to permanent housing is the average amount of time it takes Veterans who become homeless to enter permanent housing. Some communities have been able to create housing assistance delivery systems for Veterans so effective that the average length of time from homelessness to permanent housing is as short as 30 days. We recognize that this length of time may be challenging for other communities, particularly in more competitive and higher cost rental housing markets.

We believe that a benchmark achievable by most communities for the average time from the identification of Veterans' homelessness to permanent housing entry is 90 days or less. This average includes all Veterans who have entered permanent housing in the past three months, with two exceptions: (1) for any Veteran who had been identified and offered a permanent housing intervention, but had not initially accepted the offer, the average would only include the time from when they accepted the intervention until they moved into housing, and (2) any Veteran who had been offered a permanent housing intervention but chose to enter service-intensive transitional housing prior to moving to a permanent housing destination would not be included.

We recognize that this average time benchmark should also take into account, and may need to be tailored based on, local housing market conditions. Taking into account these conditions, communities should aspire to do everything possible to streamline the delivery of housing assistance to make this timeframe as short as possible. As communities continue to innovate to improve the delivery of housing assistance, and as resources for housing assistance increase, we will continue to review what timeframe constitutes a short, but realistic benchmark.

**C. THE COMMUNITY HAS SUFFICIENT PERMANENT HOUSING CAPACITY**

The number of Veterans exiting homelessness and moving into permanent housing is greater than or equal to the number of Veterans entering homelessness.

**D. THE COMMUNITY IS COMMITTED TO HOUSING FIRST AND PROVIDES SERVICE-INTENSIVE TRANSITIONAL HOUSING TO VETERANS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS ONLY IN LIMITED INSTANCES**

The number of Veterans experiencing homelessness who enter service-intensive transitional housing is less than the number of Veterans entering homelessness.

## DEFINITIONS USED FOR CRITERIA AND BENCHMARKS

**Active list** – A community must have an active list (commonly referred to as a “by-name” list) that identifies **all** homeless Veterans, including those who are in unsheltered and as well as in sheltered locations (i.e., transitional housing, emergency shelter and safe haven). The community must be able to demonstrate the list is updated or refreshed at least monthly. The list may be populated by other data sources, such as HOMES, HMIS, or other comparable databases. This list is also updated at least monthly to reflect accurate status if verification shows that a person on the active list is not a Veteran.

**Chronically Homeless** – The definition of “chronically homeless” currently in effect for the CoC Program is that which is defined in the CoC Program interim rule at 24 CFR 578.3, which states that a chronically homeless person is:

**(a)** An individual who:

- i. Is homeless and lives in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or in an emergency shelter; and
- ii. Has been homeless and living or residing in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or in an emergency shelter continuously for at least one year or on at least four separate occasions in the last 3 years; and
- iii. Can be diagnosed with one or more of the following conditions: substance use disorder, serious mental illness, developmental disability (as defined in section 102 of the Developmental Disabilities Assistance Bill of Rights Act of 2000 (42 U.S.C. 15002)), post-traumatic stress disorder, cognitive impairments resulting from brain injury, or chronic physical illness or disability;

**(b)** An individual who has been residing in an institutional care facility, including a jail, substance abuse or mental health treatment facility, hospital, or other similar facility, for fewer than 90 days and met all of the criteria in paragraph (1) of this definition [as described in Section I.D.2.(a) of this Notice], before entering that facility; or

**(c)** A family with an adult head of household (or if there is no adult in the family, a minor head of household) who meets all of the criteria in paragraph (1) of this definition [as described in Section I.D.2.(a) of this Notice, including a family whose composition has fluctuated while the head of household has been homeless.

**Permanent housing destination** – comprises the following response categories as defined in HUD’s data standards (data element 3.12):

- Moved from one HOPWA funded project to HOPWA permanent housing (PH)
- Owned by client, no ongoing housing subsidy
- Owned by client, with ongoing housing subsidy
- Permanent housing for formerly homeless persons (such as: CoC project; or HUD legacy programs; or HOPWA PH)
- Rental by client, no ongoing housing subsidy
- Rental by client, with VASH housing subsidy
- Rental by client, with GPD Transition-In-Place (TIP) housing subsidy
- Rental by client, with other ongoing housing subsidy

- Staying or living with family, permanent tenure
- Staying or living with friends, permanent tenure

**Permanent housing intervention** – Subsidy or other forms of rental assistance, with appropriate services and supports. Interventions can include HUD-VASH, SSVF, and CoC Program-funded rapid re-housing (where rental assistance is included), CoC Program-funded permanent supportive housing, Housing Choice voucher (HCV), or other form of permanent housing subsidy or rental assistance.

**Transitional housing** –

- Bridge housing – Transitional housing used as a short-term stay when a Veteran has been offered a permanent housing intervention but is not able to immediately enter the permanent housing. Generally provided for up to 90 days.
- Service-intensive transitional housing – Transitional housing not being used as bridge housing, where Veterans are actively working, with the assistance of appropriate services and supports, to achieve permanent housing.

**Veteran** – An adult who served on active duty in the armed forces of the United States, including persons who served on active duty from the military reserves or the National Guard.